The Berrien County Historical Association

The Docket

The History Center at Courthouse Square

April 2020 | Volume 36, Issue 4

BCHA Events - April

Please note that this calendar is subjected to change during the month and more events may be cancelled or postponed as more information comes in. We will work to keep you alerted of these changes in a timely manner.

April 15 to May 30
A Walk in the Park: Green Spaces & Parks of Berrien County
Sheriff's Residence
Explore the history of the places where recreation and nature meet. Guests will be able to view never before seen pictures, interact with maps, and even take a selfie with Ranger Ransom.

April 1 to April 30
45 for 45 to 45 Campaign
The History Center at Courthouse Square is turning 45 in April and we're already thinking about our next 45! We're inviting you to join our 45 for 45 to 45 campaign - donate $45 to celebrate turning 45 and help us raise $4,500 for new interpretive and wayfinding signage for the grounds.

April 15 to April 30
Independent Bookstore Sale
On the Docket Books & Gifts
We're celebrating Independent Bookstore Day (April 25) all month long with a sale! All books by the BCHA are 25% off!

April 4
Smithsonian Museum Day 2020
Courthouse Square, Free admission
CANCELLED

And Now a Word from the Director

Stay committed to your decisions, but stay flexible in your approach.

Tony Robbins

My dear friends,

When I wrote my first letter for this edition of *The Docket* a couple of weeks ago, I spoke of cake and excitement that I had, in time, discovered the 45th anniversary date of Courthouse Square. It was a pretty awesome letter.

But today, March 23, I rewrite this letter because the landscape is so much different than it was on March 6. I am currently sitting in my office (against Governor's orders, don't tell her) and looking at my calendar.

What can I salvage?

What I can modify?

What I can do to keep us connected during this time?

I've cancelled or postponed what I needed to (see left) and pushed other dates later as much as I could. The Board and I are working to make critical decisions

And I've sent so many emails on our COVID-19 response that only 20 seconds of *I Fought Law* is stuck in my head and it won't stop tormenting me.

The decisions I make today may very well affect my institution down the road in a negative manner. But they could also be the nebula in which new ideas are born. Such

April 9
TNC Talk: Berrien County Parks with Dick Shinkel, 6:30 p.m.
1839 Courthouse, Free Admission
POSTPONED

April 21
Annual Member Meeting, 7:00 p.m.
1839 Courthouse
Come hear the State of the Museum address by Liz Muhlenbeck and Rhiannon Cizon, celebrate the 2020 History Hero Award winner, and enjoy a presentation that explores local history. Refreshments will be available.

April 25 **[DATE CHANGE DUE TO COVID-19]**
Happy [BELATED] 45th Birthday Courthouse Square!
Courthouse Square, Free Admission
On April 5th, the BCHA is celebrating the 45th anniversary of the Courthouse Square, which opened on that day in 1975. We're celebrating all day. Keep an eye out for our schedule of events, coming soon!

April 26
Meriendas at the Courthouse: TBA, 2:30 p.m.
1839 Courthouse, $5 public, $2 members
Theme to be determined. Refreshments will be served and the center of the courthouse will be open for dancing.

an uncertain world we live in.

What I do know is this: The Berrien County Historical Association is committed to its mission and to you. This is your history and we won't stop sharing it. As the Board of Directors, staff, and myself begin to figure out the best way navigate this odd world we're living in currently, we won't stop finding new ways to connect you to it.

A Walk in the Park is currently scattered around the exhibit space downstairs, waiting for me to begin installation this week. I'm already shifting plans to fill in that open space after Lockdown is lifted. And if nothing else, our very disorganized office is finally getting organized.

By the way, if you need any spare office supplies, reach out, I have some that need new homes.

It's a little lonely here at the office today, staff has stayed home as they should, but I have plenty to do still and I'll work on it because this momentum hasn't stopped, it's just not as public facing as other things we've done.

I do ask that you all stay healthy and be patient with us. We'll be back up to full speed soon.

Promise.

Historically yours,

A Curated Corner: Strum the ~~Guitar~~ Ukulele

By Rhiannon Cizon, Director

April is National Guitar Month and we decided to see what we had in our collections to help celebrate it. Outside of our impressively large Marxochime Colony collection, we don't have very many instruments, so it was exciting to find this beautiful ukulele ("The Hawaiian Beauty Tone Guitar") right where PastPerfect said it was (which is also in and of itself a pleasant surprise).

While not exactly a guitar (the ukulele is a cousin of the Portuguese **machete**), as a stringed instrument, we'll count it as 'close enough.' This Hawaiian-based instrument has been part of the island's music scene since its creation in the early 1900s. Today it's most known for its popularity with people first learning to play a stringed instrument, but **the beauty of the ukulele's sound** can't be rivaled when in the hands of talented musicians.

There wasn't much specifics in our records about this piece, but we do know that based on it's size that it is likely a baritone version of the instrument, which includes some of the largest ukulele sizes. The numerous pine needles inside the case tells us this was a beloved and well used piece and it's confirmed by the many books and hand written notes and lyrics found in the bottom of the case.

We believe the owner to have been Howard R. Olson of Coloma, who's name is on one of the composer books in the case. Two of his scrap papers with lyrics are on the back of envelopes that bear his name and address. Given the wide range of dates from the scraps of paper he used and from the books, we're not sure when exactly it came into his possession.

The Mountain Ballads song book is dated 1928 and the Self Instructor for Ukulele and Ukulele-Banjo is from 1927. The Alka-Seltzer Songbook is a little older, from 1937. But the scrap pieces that we have dates for show 1968. An undated piece with lyrics for "Sing Along in 'The Back Room' at Chickhaven has a very 1950s feel to it. So the only educated guess we can give is that Mr. Olson had been playing for decades, although we think with other ukuleles besides this one.

Our records indicate the piece was donated to an auction of unused instruments and equipment after Elderly Music sold off the last of the Marx Music, Co's holdings. It was surmised by a previous curator that the piece was probably new given the Marx Music Co. label on the case, but it was damaged at the time of donation to us. However, the instrument shows none of the recorded damages and we are unsure if the piece had been repaired or if the notes from the donor are incorrect. We also need to note that we are unsure if this is a Marx Music Co. instrument (and they did produce ukuleles) or if it was just the case.

Regardless, **we encourage you to strum along** and sing a song this month!

Into the Collection Vaults: Music to My Ears

We're continuing the celebration of the guitar with some photos from our collection that include a guitar of some sort. Most of these bands performed regularly in the Berrien County area based on the artifact notes, but it's likely some of the newer performers went further out.

Photograph of six young men posed with a variety of stringed musical instruments. According to the donor, the photograph was taken in Benton Harbor in the early 1920s, and James C. Hollis is second from left in the back row, holding a mandolin.

[Curatorial note: Given the information we have on Mr. Hollis, this picture is probably 15 to 20 years older than was indicated]

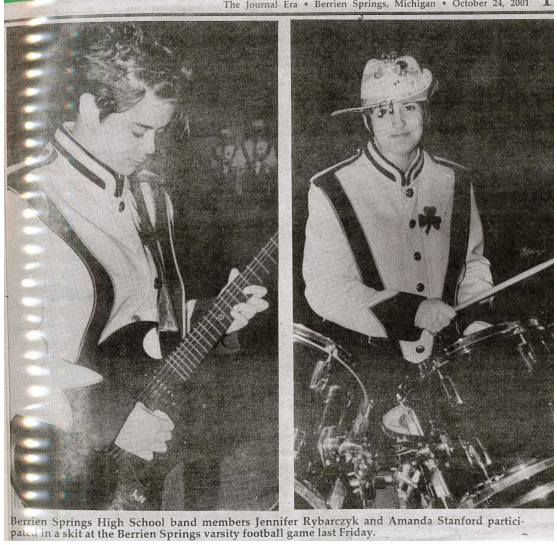
Photographic portrait of six unidentified young men with musical instruments: a guitar, accordion, violin and bugle, ca. 1900. The donor states that photographs in this collection are portraits of members of the Pennell and Fleisher families of the Berrien Springs area.

Photograph of a five-member rock and roll

band at the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in St. Joseph, 1965. The photo was a publicity photograph for SURF (Student Union Recreation Foundation) activities at the YWCA, and appeared in the 30 September 1965 edition of the *News-Palladium* (Benton Harbor) newspaper.

The photo caption identifies the young men in the band as, left to right: "Mike Romeo, Eau Claire senior, vocalist; Aubrey Douglas, Benton Harbor high school junior, rhythm guitarist; Jack Crowie, Benton Harbor high school sophomore, pianist; Terry Waite, BHHS senior, lead guitarist and band leader; and Delmar White, Hull School, drummer.

An accompanying article reported that the band was called the Musicasters, and would be playing for the YWCA SURF on October 1



Berrien Springs High School band members Jennifer Rybarczyk and Amanda Stanford partici-pated in a skit at the Berrien Springs varsity football game last Friday.

Yes, 2001 is considered history (although it seems just like yesterday). The caption from the October 24th edition of *The Journal Era* says states:

Berrien Springs High School band members Jennifer Rybarczyk and Amanda Stanford participate in a skit at the Berrien Springs varsity football game last Friday.

This article is part of a two book donation we received in February featuring photos from the Berrien Springs HS band. Most of them are from the late 1990s to the very early 2000s, but there are several from much earlier, including mid-century.

On the Docket Books & Gifts: Earth Day Spectacular

by Tara Velez, Museum Operations Coordinator

April showers are coming and so is Earth Day, so On the Docket is showcasing the great goodies we have that help us celebrate the earth and all the amazing things that grow in the rich soil here in Berrien County.

If you are wanting to purchase something from On the Docket, Shopping in the Time of COVID-19 is easy! You can place an order with us via email (info@berrienhistory.org) and we'll ship it to you! If you are local, you can make arrangements for pick up of your item with staff.

Flower themed Rubber Duckies

Globe Stress Balls

Plushy Flowers with moldable stems

Fruit and Veggie Stress Balls

45 for 45 to 45 Campaign

This month, the BCHA is celebrating the 45th anniversary of the History Center at Courthouse Square. On April 5th, we opened to the public for our first season as a museum and since then, we've been a cornerstone of history in the Cornerstone County.

We're inviting you to celebrate this milestone with us during our 45 for 45 to 45 Campaign this month.

Donate $45.00 to celebrate us turning 45 and to help us raise $4,500 for new interpretive and wayfinding signage on the grounds!

Click here to donate!

Friends and Partners

Thank you to our partners for making this month's programs and exhibits a reality!

Learn More About Us!

Support our Organization

Meet the Berrien County Historical Association

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Rhiannon Cizon, Executive Director
TBA, Curator
Tara Velez, Museum Operations Coordinator
Lori Fedore, Complex Caretaker

Our Mission Statement

Dennis Hollingsead
Eleanor Marquis
Diane Shmitchger
Carrie Smietanka-Haney
Ryan Wojtowicz

The Mission of the BCHA is to collect, preserve and interpret the history of Berrien County through exhibits, tours, publications, and educational and community outreach programs for public benefit.

About the Berrien County Historical Association

The History Center at Courthouse Square is operated by the Berrien County Historical Association and is located in Berrien Springs, MI. Since 1967, the BCHA has operated the five buildings located on Courthouse Square, including the 1839 Courthouse, an 1830s log cabin, a recreated blacksmith forge, an 1870s sheriff's residence, and the 1860s county records building. For more information about our exhibits and programs, contact the BCHA at 269-471-1202. Find us ***online***, on ***Facebook***, and on ***Instagram***.